



## Obituary for

### The Right Reverend Howard George Tripp

### Titular Bishop of Newport and Auxiliary Emeritus of Southwark

**3<sup>rd</sup> July 1927 - 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022**



Howard George Tripp was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1927 at 129, Eldridge Road, Croydon. He was the eldest son of Basil Howard Tripp, a journalist and Alice Emily Tripp (nee Haslett) who was a convert to Catholicism. He was the eldest of four children, two sisters, Bridget and Anne, and one brother, Gordon. His parental grandmother, Rachel Loin was the cousin of Father Emile du Plenry a former parish priest of Surbiton and was also related to another priest of the Southwark diocese, Father Philip de Terrant.

He was brought up in Croydon and attended St. Anne's Kindergarten School, run by the Daughters of Mary and Joseph at Sanderstead. He made his first Holy Communion on the Feast of Corpus Christi, 1935 at St Gertrude's South Croydon, the same church where he was later confirmed on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1940 by Archbishop Amigo, taking the name John Fisher, and later ordained a priest.

In 1936 he became a pupil at the John Fisher School, Purley and was there until 1944. He then went to St Joseph's College, Mark Cross from 1944 until 1947 having been accepted as a student for the priesthood by Archbishop Peter Amigo. Archbishop

Amigo then sent him to continue and complete his priestly formation at St John's Seminary, Wonersh. He was a popular student as he became head warden at Mark Cross and later was Student Dean at Wonersh.

He was ordained as a deacon on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1952 by Bishop Cowderoy in the Church of the Sacred Heart, Hove and on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1953 as a priest by Bishop Cowderoy at St Gertrude's South Croydon along with the late Father Desmond Trant McCarthy and Fr Kenneth McCarthy.

Father Tripp's first appointment was to the parish of Our Lady, Help of Christians, Blackheath as an assistant priest. He served there from 1953 until 1956. His next appointment as an assistant priest was to the parish of Our Lady, Queen of Peace, East Sheen from 1956 until 1962. During the period 1955 until 1957 he assisted part-time in the Diocesan Covenant office. In 1958 Bishop Cowderoy appointed him as Diocesan Covenant Organiser and in 1962 as Assistant Diocesan Financial Secretary, He held both posts until 1968.

In 1965 Bishop Cowderoy appointed Father Tripp as parish priest of Our Lady Queen of Peace, East Sheen. At the time he was the youngest, at just 38, parish priest in the diocese. He remained there until 1971. He is still remembered fondly by parishioners at East Sheen with and held in great esteem. Even later on, he was often invited back to celebrate baptism and weddings for his former parishioners.

In 1971, Father Tripp was asked by Archbishop Cowderoy to take on a new apostolate and was appointed as Secretary of the Southwark Catholic Children's Society. For the next nine years he divided his time between the Society's offices in Purley and visiting the 21 institutions it ran, making parish appeals on behalf of the society and visiting schools promoting the annual Lenten Box appeal. He had to learn about the theory and practice of child care as he went along. He was a good listener and a voracious reader and he soon became highly competent in his new field. During his time the work of the society covered both the Archdiocese of Southwark and the recently created Diocese of Arundel and Brighton and then extended its work also to the Diocese of Portsmouth. It was also around this time that the focus on residential child care was changing and Father Tripp guided the Society into exploring new ways of working particularly in the area of foster care. As a consequence he oversaw the closure of a number of the society's institutions, including its approved schools and residential homes.

In 1978, Father Howard celebrated his Silver Jubilee of Ordination to the priesthood. In appreciation of his work for the Southwark Catholic Children's Society, Archbishop Michael Bowen petitioned Pope Paul VI to have

Father Tripp created a Prelate of Honour. This was granted and on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1978 the Archbishop wrote to him “I have much pleasure in writing to let you know that the Holy Father has made you a Prelate of Honour. This is in recognition of the great work you have done and are still doing in the field of child care.” Responding to Archbishop Michael, Monsignor Tripp wrote “I am most grateful to the Holy Father for this honour and grateful to those who mentioned my name to His Holiness. I am delighted that it is for what I have done, and am doing, in the field of child care as this means that many people involved in the work of the children’s society will be encouraged by this sign of Papal approval for what we are all doing for children in the name of the Church”

Towards the end of 1979, Monsignor Howard’s ministry took on a different direction when it was announced on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1979 that Pope John Paul II had appointed him as Titular Bishop of Newport and an auxiliary bishop of Southwark, along with Father John Jukes OFM Conv who was appointed as Titular Bishop of Strathearn and auxiliary in Southwark. Both new bishops were episcopally ordained in a ceremony in St. George’s Cathedral, Southwark on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1980 presided over by Archbishop Bowen and assisted as co-consecrators by Bishop Anthony Emery of Portsmouth and Bishop Charles Henderson, the auxiliary bishop of Southwark. He was given pastoral responsibility for the newly created South West Area of the Archdiocese of Southwark, with Bishop Jukes been given responsibility for Kent, and Bishop Henderson taking on the South East area.

For the next 26 years Bishop Howard was an ever present and zealous pastor. He made regular visits to the parishes of his area, carrying out parish visitations every two to three years, always available to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation. At the height of the confirmation season he would often celebrate four or five confirmations over a given weekend. He visited the schools and colleges in his area on a regular basis. His knowledge of the parishes in his area, his memory for names of parishioners who were involved in areas of parish life and his easy-going and approachable manner made him a very popular and much loved Pastor. He was always ready to engage and was comfortable with all ages and people from all walks of life and backgrounds. He always made a point of thanking people for their welcome, for their help, for looking after him so well whenever he made a parish visit.

Within the Archdiocese of Southwark he was given special responsibility in matters of social welfare, was for a number of years the co-ordinator of the Ethnic Chaplains of the diocese, and served as chairman of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission. He continued his links with the Southwark Catholic Children’s Society as a Director until the society was disbanded in the late 1990’s. On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1984 he was appointed as a member of the College of Consultors until his retirement as an auxiliary bishop. He also served as Chairman of the Diocesan Finance Committee for five years, following the retirement of Bishop Henderson from that role in 2001.

As a member of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, Bishop Howard held a number of briefs. For many years he was chairman of the Bishops Conference Committee for Public Life. He believed that Catholics had a responsibility to be involved in the public forum in whatever way they could. By doing this they could play a part in shaping society. He was on the working party that produced, in 1996, the Bishops Conference document “The Common Good”, hailed by many as a major contribution to the debate over how to build a ‘just and fair society’. From this document came, in 2004, Taxation for the Common Good. Speaking at the launch of the document Bishop Howard said that “all must contribute to building a society for the good of all. Taxation is one way of contributing to this. We should not ask how little we can pay but what we can give towards building a just society”

For many years he had dreamed of organising a major conference on Catholics in public life. This finally happened in 1999 at Liverpool Hope University College. The four-day event attracted around 400 people. The speakers included Baroness Shirley Williams, Lord Nolan and MPs Ann Widdecombe and John Battle.

As a follow-up, a three-day symposium entitled Public Life and the Media was held at St Mary’s College, Strawberry Hill, in 2001. Mark Thompson, then BBC director of television, and European Commissioner the Rt Hon Chris Patten were among the speakers.

In 2002 Pope John Paul declared St Thomas More as the official patron saint of statesmen and women. Bishop Howard described St Thomas as a role model for those such as MPs, councillors and lawyers who often struggle with the demands of their role in public life and their conscience as formed by faith and the teachings of the Church. “People in public life are engaged in an honourable vocation. They may be faced with the various issues and dilemmas that demand responses that are not easy or simple to make,”

Bishop Howard’s South West area, like many parts of London included Catholics from many of the ethnic minorities. He seemed the natural choice then to be the link bishop for racial justice. He played a part in setting up the Catholic Commission for Racial Justice and then its successor in 1984 the Catholic Association for Racial Justice. As a Bishop he supported and attended the first National Black Congress organised by CARJ in 1990 at Digby Stuart College. In 2002 CARJ became an agency of the Bishops Conference and this was largely due Bishop Howard advice. The creation of Racial Justice Sunday was also an initiative that he was involved in.

Aware of the multi-cultural make up of parishes in the Archdiocese of Southwark, Bishop Howard gave his backing to the Association of Priests of African and Asian descent. He had a great affection for Ghana and visited it on many occasions. He attended the National Eucharistic Congress in Ghana in 1997. As a Bishop he ordained the first Permanent Deacon from Ghana for the Archdiocese of Southwark and later on the first Nigerian born Permanent Deacon for the Archdiocese of Southwark and the first in the United Kingdom. He was also instrumental in inviting the Daughters of Divine Love, a Nigerian order of Religious Sisters to come and work in the Archdiocese of Southwark.

As a result of his visits to Ghana, in 1995, along with Archbishop Peter Sarpong of Kumasi, he concelebrated a Mass to inaugurate the establishment in the United Kingdom of the Knights and Ladies of Marshall. He held them in great esteem and was often invited to lead events for them even outside the Southwark diocese.

During his 42 years as a Bishop he held a number of other posts, including Ecclesiastical Adviser to the Knights of St Columba; Ecclesiastical Advisor to the Catholic Union of Great Britain, Chairman of the Catholic Association; Religious consultant to the Scouts Association; trustee of the Catholic Scout Advisory Council Chaplaincy (RC) Trust; Roman Catholic Episcopal Member of the Committee for Local Ecumenical Projects In England, Chairman of the Committee of Lourdes Pilgrimage Director's. Vice-Chairman of the London Churches Group; Trustee of the Southwark Brethren Charity. He was also President of the Catholic Welfare Council, a director of the London Churches Employment Trust and a founder member of the Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust. He also represented the Bishops Conference on the Churches Committee for Hospital Chaplaincy and was involved in the formation of the Multi-Faith Group for Healthcare Chaplains.

He was instrumental in introducing the Ascent Movement into the United Kingdom, an organisation which was founded in France for retired men and women. He launched the movement in his own South West Area and from this beginning it has now spread to many parishes both within the Archdiocese of Southwark and beyond.

Bishop Howard fostered and maintained strong links with the local Christian churches in his area, always meeting representatives of local Christian churches whenever he made a parish visitation. He developed strong links and friendship with the Anglican Bishops that worked alongside him in South West London. In 1994 he with the then Bishop of Kingston, Bishop Keith Sutton made a joint visit to Rome and were received by Pope John Paul II at a papal audience. He continued these links extending the hand of friendship and hospitality to other faith leaders who worked with him.

In 2003 Bishop Howard celebrated his Golden Jubilee as a priest. In addition to joining the annual Mass for Jubilarians at St. George's Cathedral with Archbishop Michael Bowen he also celebrated a Mass for his area at the chapel of the John Fisher School, Purley, acknowledging that his priestly vocation was very much nurtured by his time as a pupil at the school. As a Bishop he was to subsequently ordain a number of old boys of the school to the priesthood and the permanent diaconate.

In 2005, both he and Bishop John Jukes celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their Episcopal Ordination. They both went to Rome and attended the very last public audience of Pope John Paul II.

Bishop Howard, having reached the canonical age of retirement of 75 submitted his resignation in 2002 which was accepted *nunc pro tunc*. Archbishop Michael, and then Archbishop Kevin asked him to carry on until his replacement was appointed. Bishop Howard continued until in 2006 his successor as auxiliary, Bishop Paul Hendricks was appointed. In his letter to Bishop Howard of 27<sup>th</sup> June that year, Archbishop Kevin wrote, "Now that your resignation as an auxiliary bishop of Southwark has taken effect, I want to express my gratitude to you for your lifetime service to the diocese and in particular for your continuing work in recent years since I was installed as Archbishop. In another letter written a year later to mark Bishop Howard's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Archbishop Kevin wrote "I hope you won't mind me saying that I think you're Priestly and Episcopal Ministries have been inspiring and very fruitful. Your knowledge of the diocese and your commitment to it was evident to me from our very first meeting of the Archbishop's Council"

Following his retirement from active Episcopal Ministry Bishop Howard entered the next chapter of his life, as a retired active priest of the Archdiocese of Southwark. He was invited by Canon Colm Acton to come and help out in the parish of St John Fisher, Merton. And so he became the "honorary curate" at St John Fisher, Merton, where he would also celebrate Mass in the local convents and was a governor of the primary schools. He continued to exercise Episcopal Ministry from time to time when called upon, celebrating Mass and Confirmations in the parishes. He was an avid visitor of the sick and housebound during his time at St John Fisher, and celebrated Mass there at the weekends. He is remembered fondly at the parish and was delighted to be able to "help out" without any responsibilities and to help the parish clergy in the tasks he was asked to do.

He was ever present at diocesan events, including the clergy gatherings, days of recollection and On-going Formation events, He travelled to France for the clergy in service days at Merville when he would attend with the clergy of his SW Area. In 2010 he made his final visit to Lourdes with the Diocesan Pilgrimage, travelling on the train with the then diocesan director and a number of Southwark clergy and pilgrims. It was during this

pilgrimage that he gave a catechists to the Southwark pilgrims who were to receive the Sacrament of the Sick. He was also an honorary member of the Vicars for Religious Team.

He was diligent in attending clergy funerals, the last one being just a few weeks ago when he came to the Cathedral for the Funeral of Fr Patrick O'Leary. He never missed a Chrism Mass and was present in his wheelchair at the Chrism Mass in Holy Week this year.

Each day he would celebrate Mass for the parishes of his area and would often ring the parish concerned to say he was praying for them. Even in retirement he kept a special interest in the parishes and schools he had looked after as an auxiliary bishop.

During his retirement he continued to cultivate his love of vegetable gardening until this became too much for him. On visiting a parish on one occasion he once commented that "Sometimes I think I should not carry a shepherds crook but a garden fork. When I come to a parish, I'm just turning over the soil a bit so that things can grow.

He was close to his own family and in 2013 they all came together at Our Lady, Queen of Peace, East Sheen to mark his Diamond Jubilee as a priest.

In 2019 he realised that he needed to move to a place where he could be looked after, and so in July of that same year he moved to St Peter's Vauxhall, where he joined the priestly community who were resident there, including at the time, the late Archbishop Michael Bowen. He continued to exercise a ministry within St Peter's Home, but in the latter years, as his body slowed down and his health began to deteriorate this ministry was restricted to the daily celebration of Mass in the chapel

Bishop Howard was fortunate to live to see two Pope's visit the United Kingdom, in 1982, had the joy of welcoming Pope St John Paul II to St. George's Cathedral, Southwark. The London Evening News at the time had a picture of a smiling Bishop Howard with the caption, "an expression of joy on the face of a welcoming clergyman as Pope John Paul begins his visit" Then in 2010 he had the joy of welcoming Pope Benedict XVI during his state visit to the United Kingdom and of meeting him at the Bishops gathering at Oscot College

In 2020 he celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Episcopal Ordination. Sadly, his brother bishop, Bishop John Jukes had died in 2011. They had been bishops together and became great friends and Bishop Howard visited Bishop Jukes annually when the latter moved to Scotland. He preached at Bishop Jukes funeral Mass in the cathedral and it is fitting that he now will be laid to rest near to him, and to the four bishops he worked with most closely, Archbishop Cowderoy, Archbishop Bowen Bishop Henderson, and Archbishop Peter Smith, and to the Bishop who confirmed him and accepted him as a student for the seminary, Archbishop Peter Amigo, the same bishop whose pectoral cross Bishop Howard used for many years and whom he admired and respected as a great pastor. Like Archbishop Amigo, Bishop Howard had a wonderful memory for names and faces.

On the occasion of his Ruby Jubilee of Episcopal Ordination, Bishop Howard was invited to join Archbishop John Wilson and his household for lunch. Writing to the Archbishop after the event to thank him Bishop Howard wrote the following.

"The church of Southwark has nurtured me for over ninety years. To serve the people and priests of Southwark for over forty years is but a duty to a nurturing parent. I remember frequently the commitment I made in response to a question put to me and to Bishop John Jukes at our Episcopal ordination. We resolved by the grace of the Holy Spirit to discharge to the end of our lives the office the Apostles entrusted to the bishops who passed it on to us by the laying on of hands" There was no mention of retirement. "I also remember the commitment I made to Archbishop Cowderoy and his successors at my priestly ordination. You can count on me responding positively to any request you may make of me."

Bishop Howard's whole life was rooted in his solid faith. He was a man of prayer, his Divine Office, Mass and the Rosary were the centre of his spiritual life. He was totally faithful to the churches magisterium and a man of absolute obedience to his superiors.

He maintained close contacts with the clergy of the diocese and continued to play an interest in diocesan events up until his death

He was proud of his Croydon roots, his priesthood and his diocese. These were his treasures in life to which he was always so grateful.

Bishop Howard Tripp, priest of the Archdiocese of Southwark for 69 years, Bishop for 42 years, a good and faithful servant, much loved and mourned by many, died in Kings College Hospital London on the evening of Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022 aged 95.

May he rest in peace and rise in Glory.